

Appendix A

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

A. Sec 300.380. General CSPD Requirements

In Rhode Island the Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES) provides direction for all students in Rhode Island including students with disabilities. The CES is based upon Rhode Island legislation enacted in 1997 and amended and expanded in 1998. In June 1997 the Rhode Island General Assembly passed Budget Article 31 with a major thrust to improve student achievement. Article 31 “demands that student performance grow ever stronger in our state. To meet this test, all educators, parents, policy makers, business leaders and members of the larger community must maintain a relentless focus on results, buttressed by the leadership, resources, information and capacity required to improve them. The General Assembly also squarely charges the Department of Education, in concert with local school districts and communities, with building the information base required to plan thoroughly for the changes that will improve student performance and with building the capacity knowledge, skills and abilities required to make those plans meet the desired results.

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES) serves as a clear guide for Rhode Island Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The CES supports the concept that the goals of special education and the expectations for students with disabilities is the same for all students as outlined in Rhode Island Common Core of Learning. The CES established a system of standards, assessment and accountability for school improvement. There are four primary objectives for the CES that set the focus on improved outcomes for all students including students with disabilities.

- By 2001, 100% of districts and schools will have quality strategic plans that state their mission, objectives, strategies and targeted resources and means to measure progress in closing gaps in student performance, reaching high standards, successful entry into careers and increasing graduation rates.
- By 2003, all schools will meet or exceed improvement targets for student learning.
- By 2003, the percentage of students who do not meet or exceed state proficiency standards in English, Language Arts, Mathematics and Health will be reduced by half.
- By 2005, no less than 90% of fourth grade students will meet or exceed state proficiency standards in English, Language Arts and Mathematics.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) Office of Special Needs is responsible for the policies and procedures involved with implementing a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development in Rhode Island. The purpose of the CSPD is to improve the quality of educational programs for children and young adults with special needs through the effective preparation and on-going professional development of educators, service providers and families. It is through the development and implementation of the CSPD that the goal of an adequate supply of highly qualified personnel can be realized. Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) believes that a coordinated statewide effort is imperative and has increased the position of CSPD Coordinator from a part time position to full time. The responsibility for the coordination, development and on-going evaluation of the CSPD for Part B of IDEA is assigned to the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project at Rhode Island College. The RI Department of Education has reinvested their commitment to this initiative by entering into a new five year contract with Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) for continued leadership of CSPD requirements.

In order to ensure broad based participation, Rhode Island has established the Rhode Island Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Advisory Committee. The CSPD Advisory includes representatives from a large number of constituencies and interests including, representatives from local school districts, school administrators, parent organizations, institutions of higher education, teacher unions, early intervention, related services personnel, CSPD Coordinator for Part C Early Intervention (EI), CSPD Coordinator for Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, which is the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitative Services, and other state agencies who participates in the Children’s Cabinet. All members share equal responsibility for review of data on trends in special education census, personnel needs, continuing education needs of teachers and other personnel, the performance of students in a variety of outcome areas and the needs of families. This information serves as the basis for development, review and periodic

update of the CSPD. The CSPD Advisory meets quarterly to review the status of Rhode Island's CSPD and to recommend changes or improvements in the system.

The three major areas addressed through the CSPD are

1. To improve student performance for ALL KIDS through targeted professional development and capacity building.
2. To recruit and prepare a sufficient number of qualified professional staff to meet the needs of an ever increasing special education population.
3. To develop and maintain increased interagency collaborative agreements.

B. Sec.300.381. Adequate Supply of Qualified Personnel

Rhode Island establishes targeted supply/demand needs in special education and related services through the CSPD Advisory.

(a). The number of personnel providing special education and related services. The total number of fully certified special education teachers and related service providers in Rhode Island is 4,393 and the total number of special education teachers is 1774.85. These figures are for students ages 3-21.

(b). Relevant information on current and anticipated personnel vacancies and shortages (including temporary certification).

Rhode Island projects the need for 1251 new special educators in the next five years. The special education population in Rhode Island is growing at a rate of 1150 students per year. Rhode Island Regulations mandate a maximum teacher student ratio of 1-6 for students with severe disabilities, 1-10 for students with mild moderate disabilities in special settings and 1-30 for students with mild moderate disabilities in resource settings. Currently 3% of students with disabilities are in 1-6 settings, 33% are in 1-10 settings and 60% are in 1-30 settings. Applying these percentages to the 1150 new students per year, Rhode Island would need 67 new teachers each year or 335 for five years. Approximately 20% of special educators leave to take positions in general education or in other fields. Applying that percentage would indicate a need to replace an additional 355 teachers during the next five years. Applying the projected retirement figures of 25% would indicate a need for another 444 teachers. There are currently 117 emergency certificates issued for special educators in Rhode Island. These teachers need to be brought to full certification. Adding all of these together, Rhode Island would need a minimum of 1251 new special educators in the next five years.

(c) Extent of certification or retraining necessary to eliminate these shortages, that is based to the maximum extent possible on existing assessment of personnel needs .

There are only three colleges or universities that are accredited to prepare special education teachers in Rhode Island. Rhode Island College graduates an average of 123 special education teachers per year, 80% of whom remain in Rhode Island. Providence College prepares an average of 103 special education teachers each year of whom approximately 25% remain in Rhode Island. Salve Regina prepares an average of 28 students per year, 10% remain in Rhode Island.

There is a projected gap of 611 teachers, which indicates an upcoming major need in Rhode Island. CSPD proposes the most effective means to closing the gap are (a) to foster collaboration between all colleges and universities involved in teacher education around a set of recruitment and non-traditional certification strategies and (b) build the capacity of local schools to collaborate with higher education in implementing those strategies.

There are four primary personnel needs: (1) the need to recruit and prepare an increased number of special education teachers, especially teachers from diverse backgrounds, (2) the need to recruit and retain special education leaders, (3) the need to address some specific issues such as the need for bilingual or ESL special education teachers and the need for speech language therapists, and (4) the need to build the capacity of local schools to participate in the recruitment, preparation, and ongoing support of these professionals.

C. Sec. 300.382 Improvement Strategies

- (a) **Prepare general and special education personnel with the content knowledge and collaborative skills needed to meet the needs of children with disabilities including how the State will work with other States on common certification criteria.**

Continuing education and professional development opportunities provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) are based upon needs identified through the CSPD Advisory assessment efforts. Continuing education needs are also shared with institutions of higher education and other interested constituencies. Based upon the results of the CSPD needs assessment, the CSPD Advisory has identified (a) a professional development model that includes institutions of higher education, community, parents and school personnel; (b) professional development priorities and specific target audiences to receive professional development for the period of this State plan. The major continuing education initiatives identified by the CSPD include: The Rhode Island Autism Project, IEP Network, Positive Behavioral Supports, Assistive Technology Partnership (ATAP), Diverse Learning Needs Teams, Transition, Paraprofessionals Members of Instructional Teams, Collaborative Partnerships with the Providence School District, The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), and Rhode Island College for Recruitment and Certification of Bilingual Special Educators, Cooperative Agreement with University of Rhode Island for Recruitment and Certification of Bilingual Speech and Language Therapists, Keys to Quality Project, Early Childhood Collaborative Planning Project, I Read Literacy Initiative, and Comprehensive Evaluation Diagnosis Assessment Referral and Reevaluation (CEDARS) Family Centers.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) Office of Special Needs and Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) offer professional development activities to address these priorities. Newsletters, topical booklets and announcements provide detailed descriptions of content, the nature of the professional development offered, and the specific program objectives. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) publishes an electronic calendar of all professional development activities and provides for approved inservice credits for participants. Consultants contracted through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) are selected for their knowledge and experience in the topics identified as priorities.

Work with other states on common certification criteria

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has established collaborative relationships with the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), the Chiefs of the Bureaus of Special Education/Pupil Services and Certification/Professional Development, the Director of Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), and the CSPD Coordinator. These relationships include ongoing dialogue regarding similarities and differences in the states' certification criteria.

Rhode Island belongs to the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education Certification (NASDTEC) (note: the current National President is Rhode Island's Director of the Office of Teacher Certification) and the Interstate Certification Compact (ICC). The ICC was designed to enhance teacher certification reciprocity among the state and participating states acknowledge certificates issued by other ICC member states. In addition Rhode Island participates in the Northeast Regional Credential. Additionally, Rhode Island has entered into a memorandum of understanding with other northeast regional states to explore continued work together on common certification issues.

- (b) Prepare professionals and paraprofessionals in the area of early intervention with the content knowledge and collaborative skills needed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities.**

In Rhode Island the responsibility as Lead Agency for Part C has been assigned to the Department of Health. The CSPD Plan for Part C is developed and implemented by Department of Health. All professional development activities offered through Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) are open to early intervention professionals, paraprofessionals and families.

- (c) Work with institutions of higher education and other entities that (on both a preservice and an inservice basis) prepare personnel who work with children with disabilities to ensure that those institutions and entities develop the capacity to support quality professional development programs that meet State and local needs.**

All public and private institutions of higher education in Rhode Island that have an interest in the preparation of personnel who support the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families have the opportunity to participate in the development including needs assessment data review and gathering, review and annual planning of the CSPD. They are represented on the Advisory and participate in the dissemination of information to their colleagues on the CSPD Advisory, and various CSPD initiatives and priorities. Rhode Island has established a Teaching and Learning Center which will assist in assuring that all professional development in Rhode Island will meet established standards for quality. The institutions of higher education, Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), and CSPD participate in this initiative.

- (d) Work to develop collaborative agreements with other States for the joint support and development of programs to prepare personnel for which there is not sufficient demand within a single State to justify support or development of a program of preparation.**

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Technical Project (RITAP), and the CSPD Advisory have established and maintained linkages with other state, regional and national networks including regional CSPD Coordinators, the national CSPD Caucus, the National Clearinghouse of Professions in Special Education, the NERRC and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE), and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). These contacts provide a network for the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) staff and CSPD Advisory to gain information on research and best practice and trends in the field of special education. In addition, Rhode Island has entered into dialogue with the NERRC states around ways to support and expand the one professional development program for the blind and visually impaired.

- (e) Work in collaboration with other States, particularly neighboring States, to address the lack of uniformity and reciprocity in credentialing of teachers and other personnel.**

As described in (a) above, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) and CSPD continue to be involved in Interstate Agreements for facilitating uniformity and reciprocity in credentialing.

- (f) Enhance the ability of teachers and others to use strategies, such as behavioral interventions, to address the conduct of children with disabilities that impedes the learning of children with disabilities and others.**

Rhode Island Legislation Article 31 legislates student intervention teams for every school in Rhode Island. These Teacher Support Teams (TST) are linked to school improvement process established in Rhode Island. It is a general education initiative that brings teachers into the problem solving process and supports them during implementation of practical, classroom-based strategies. It provides teachers with a forum to address strategies, it also assists them in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and documentation of accommodations in teaching, learning and assessment. This assists them to support an

individual student within the context of the classroom. The Teacher Support Team (TST) offers opportunities for job embedded professional development for team members as well as for teachers requesting support.

Research and practice in the areas of Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Behavioral Supports indicates that the school and classroom environments created by adults is the major factor in the development of student's behaviors which enhance their social emotional and academic learning the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) employs a full time staff person to meet the ever-increasing requests for professional development in this area. In addition many schools in Rhode Island have worked with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) Behavioral Specialist to create effective peer helping networks which build schoolwide community with the goal of reducing social barriers and increasing meaningful connections among all students. In this context community begins with the "community" in the classroom, and expands schoolwide and beyond. This initiative is implemented in collaboration with other offices to support school reform efforts in Rhode Island.

(g) Acquire and disseminate, to teachers, administrators, school board members and related services personnel, significant knowledge derived from educational research and other sources, and how the State will, if appropriate, will adopt promising practices, materials and technology.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), and the CSPD Advisory Committee initiate efforts to acquire significant information of promising practices derived from education research and other demonstration projects. Together they share responsibility for reviewing the information from education research and other national and regional demonstration projects.

Information regarding promising practices in general and special education that impact students with disabilities is disseminated to general educators, special educators, support personnel, administrators, interested agencies, family organizations, and institutions of higher education. Multiple approaches to dissemination are utilized including web-based postings, interactive messages, multiple mailings, and newsletters, etc. The CSPD Coordinator provides the support for the dissemination of topic specific brochures and information. Some Rhode Island initiative specific information includes, Guide to Developing IEPs, ADD Manual, Teacher Support Team, SALTWORKS Guide to Effective Practices, Functional Behavioral Assessment Guide, Paraprofessional Newsletter, the Assistive Technology Partnership Monthly News, and the TBI Guidebook.

Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) also maintains a library of state, national and regional video and other materials to support the diverse learning needs of students in general education settings, including students with disabilities. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) and CSPD are committed to increasing library resources.

(h) Recruit, prepare and retain qualified personnel, including personnel with disabilities and personnel from groups that are under-represented in the fields of general education, special education, and related services.

On going needs assessment data informs the priorities for Rhode Island CSPD. One of these priorities is to facilitate collaboration among all of the institutions of higher education involved in teacher education. This includes jointly recruiting non-traditional students and develop non-traditional avenues to full certification. Outreach efforts will focus on recruiting teacher assistants, family members, high school students from minority backgrounds, and high school students with disabilities. Individuals with emergency certificates will be assisted to develop Individual Professional Development Plans (I Plans) that will combine traditional and non-traditional avenues to full certification. Collaboration between higher education and local schools departments will provide the supervision and support for these individuals and other beginning teachers.

Data collected by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), and CSPD indicates that 66% of Rhode Island school districts have had two or

more special education directors in the past five years and 36% of all special education administrators have left in the past five years. There is little stability in educational administration at the current time. Recently, a leadership development coordinating committee was established to develop and maintain an increased number of educational leaders who support all students including students with disabilities.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island College and the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) have an aggressive affirmative action policy. These policies have resulted in an increase in the number of candidates and personnel in underrepresented groups. The CSPD Advisory has two members who are individuals with disabilities who hold positions in state and local government and bring the perspective of having a disability to the CSPD Advisory. As state and local employees, they are evidence of the state's commitment to employment and promotion of individuals with disabilities.

- (i) Insure that the plan is integrated, to the maximum extent possible, with other professional development plans and activities, including plans and activities developed and carried out under other Federal and State laws that address personnel recruitment and training.**

Representation on the CSPD Advisory Committee provides opportunities for collaborative goal setting, sharing of resources and integrated implementation. Other State agencies represented on the CSPD Advisory Committee include: Governor's Policy Office, Department of Health, Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council, Department for Children Youth and Families, Department of Mental Health Retardation Hospital, Office of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Education staff including Deputy Commissioner, Office of Special Needs, Office of Teacher Certification, Office of Integrated Social Services, Office of School Improvement, and Office of Instruction. In addition, all colleges and universities that provide for teacher education related service providers and paraprofessionals are represented. School districts, teacher organizations, parent organizations including Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) our Rhode Island Parent and Training Information (RIPTI) and the State Advisory Committee. Other important partners include Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) and the University Affiliated Program of Rhode Island (UAP).

- (j) Provide for the joint training of parents and special education, related services, and general education personnel.**

As stated previously, parents, general educators, special educators, and related service providers are all members of the CSPD Advisory Committee and have the opportunity to help develop, implement, and evaluate all CSPD priority professional development

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), and CSPD activities are provided using a model that frequently includes parents, special education, related service providers and general education personnel as members of not only the audience, but also as a team for professional development presentations. The spring, summer, winter and fall professional development leadership series includes invitations to all parent organization members, administrators of special education, related service provider professional organizations, and general education personnel.

A family centered focus is embedded into all of CSPD initiatives. For example, CSPD activities include family/professional teams as target participants and also as presenters. The goal for the IEP Network is to have 3 representatives in every school in Rhode Island consisting of a general educator, special educator, and a parent. Families are represented in all technical assistance networks to build the capacity of local schools to provide instruction to all students including students with disabilities.